

What is claimed is:

1. A receiver hitch-mountable utility cart comprising;
  - 5            a support frame for supporting a payload;
  - a hitch arm rigidly attached to the support frame, the hitch arm shaped to engage a receiver hitch bar of an over-the-road vehicle;
  - a wheelbase assembly with wheels for transporting the cart with the wheels on the ground; and
- 10            a user-operable translation mechanism connecting the wheelbase to the frame, enabling the frame to be raised and lowered relative to the wheelbase, such that the cart, with the support frame in an uppermost position, may be aligned and connected to the receiver hitch bar of the over-the-road vehicle, and the wheels may then be retracted to carry the cart entirely on the receiver hitch bar.
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2. The hitch-mountable cart of claim 1 wherein, after hitching the cart to the over-the-road vehicle, the user-operable translation mechanism may be urged to and locked in an upright position, lifting the wheelbase off of the ground while the cart is transported.
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3. The hitch-mountable cart of claim 1 wherein the wheelbase assembly comprises 2 wheels and a supporting axle.
4. The hitch-mountable cart of claim 3 wherein the axle comprises an axle housing and a pair of axle extension members enabling length extension of the wheelbase.

5. The hitch-mountable cart of claim 5 wherein the axle is a drop-down axle for lowering the center of gravity of the cart.

6. The hitch-mountable cart of claim 1 further comprising a jack assembly  
5 rigidly attached to the frame and to the axle of the wheelbase for providing assistance in lowering and lifting heavy payloads supported on the cart.

7. The hitch-mountable cart of claim 1 enabled to be transported on the wheelbase as a hand-truck when not coupled to the over-the-road vehicle.

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8. The hitch-mountable cart of claim 1 further comprising a socket-type trailer hitch, enabling the cart to be towed by a small tractor or an all-terrain vehicle at a job site.

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9. The hitch-mountable cart of claim 3 wherein the at least 2 wheels are freely rotatable caster wheels mounted to the axle with castor hardware.

10. A method for transporting a receiver hitch-mountable cart by an over-the-road vehicle, the cart comprising a support frame for supporting a payload, a hitch arm rigidly attached to the support frame, the hitch arm shaped to engage a receiver hitch bar of an over-the-road vehicle, a wheelbase assembly with wheels for transporting the cart with the wheels on the ground, and a user-operable translation mechanism connecting the wheelbase to the frame, enabling the frame to be raised and lowered relative to the wheelbase by operation of the load-lift lever, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) positioning the cart behind the service vehicle;

- (b) operating the translation mechanism to elevate the frame and the hitch apparatus to an elevation aligned for engaging the receiver hitch;
- (c) moving the cart forward to engage the receiver hitch; and
- (d) securing the coupling;

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11. The method of claim 10 further comprising a mechanical jack between the support frame and the wheelbase assembly, and in step (b) the jack is used to aid in raising or lowering of the support frame relative to the  
10 wheelbase assembly.

12. The method of claim 10 further comprising a step (e) for operating the translation mechanism to elevate the cart wheels off of the ground after the coupling is secured.

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13. The method of claim 12 wherein in step (e) the user-operable translation mechanism is lockable into the upright position for secure transport.

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14. The receiver hitch-mountable utility cart of claim 1 wherein the mechanical jack comprises a quick-release mechanism for disengaging the jack for rapid repositioning.

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15. The receiver hitch-mountable utility cart of claim 14 wherein the mechanical jack is a screw jack, and the quick-release mechanism comprises a half nut mounted on a spring-loaded retractable member, such that the half nut may be released from the jack screw.

16. The receiver hitch-mountable utility cart of claim 15 wherein the engagement-disengagement mechanism is spring loaded and lever operated.